



The GeriJournal

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Formulary News

The latest big name drug to go generic is Plavix® (clopidogrel). The generic form (Apotex) is the same shape and colour, with similar markings (CL 75). It is a bit smaller which should help with swallowing.

The 4.5 and 9 mg strengths of Hydromorph Contin® are now covered by ODB. This will allow for easier dose titration in palliative care. A new injectable antipsychotic has been added as well. Invega Sustenna® (paliperadone) is an active metabolite of risperidone. While it has no clinical advantage, when compared to Risperdal Consta®, administration is much simpler and likely less painful. Invega Sustenna® is supplied in prefilled syringes with two different needles, a 22-gauge needle for i.m. gluteal administration and a 23-gauge needle for injection into the deltoid. Risperdal Consta® is supplied as a complicated multistep kit, with mixing and configuration required before injection. Furthermore, needle size is bigger (20 and 21-gauge) and

injection frequency greater (biweekly vs. monthly) with the Risperdal® product.

Statins in Season

It's been a quiet flu season so far, but you never know what's waiting just around the corner. In case we need a little extra help, we may have a new weapon against the Influenza virus – statins!

A publication in the December 13th issue of *The Journal of Infectious Diseases* showed a remarkable reduction in mortality in association with these cholesterol lowering drugs. The charts of more than 3,000 hospitalized, culture positive Influenza patients from the 2007-2008 flu season were analyzed. One third of these patients (median age 76 years) were taking statins before or during their hospital stay. There were a total of 151 deaths, but those taking statins were 41% less likely to die within the first thirty days following their diagnosis. Adjustments were made to compensate for differences in age; race; cardiovascular, lung and renal disease; influenza vaccination; and antiviral administration between the statin and non-statin groups.

There have been other studies showing a statin benefit in pneumonia and Influenza, but this is the most extensive one to date. It is believed this protective effect is due to a

reduction in inflammatory response and subsequent fever, a secondary action of statins. If a prospective study were to confirm the results of this analysis we may find ourselves using a new medication, Lipiflu® (Lipitor/Tamiflu), to prevent and treat Influenza in the future.

Cranberry for UTIs

Cranberry products and extract have long been thought to be useful in the prevention and treatment of urinary tract infections. In fact, four notable placebo controlled trials have shown a 34% reduction in UTI recurrence. The *Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada* list cranberry juice in their guidelines for prevention of recurrent UTIs in women.

Until recently, however, cranberry products had not been compared head to head against antibiotics in UTI prophylaxis. A study published in *Archives of Internal Medicine* did just that. Bactrim® plain, one tablet daily, was compared to one 500 mg capsule of cranberry powder given twice daily. Bactrim® was significantly more effective, but resistance to Bactrim® and unrelated antibiotics often developed. Cranberry products are a safe (warfarin interactions are possible), moderately effective alternative in the prevention of recurrent UTIs.